

betterment of Sedalia. I know that the Members of the House will join me in congratulating him on a job well done.

27TH ANNIVERSARY OF TURKEY'S
INVASION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
CYPRUS

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 18, 2001

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, today marks the 27th anniversary of one of the most devastating events in Greek-Turkish-Cypriot relations. On July 20th 1974, troops from Turkey started a campaign that displaced almost 200,000 Greek Cypriots from the northern part of the island of Cyprus. Throughout this invasion, over 1,600 men, women, and children disappeared. To date, the Turkish government declines to supply any information regarding their whereabouts. After twenty-five years, Greek Cypriots still remain refugees within their own country and are not allowed to return to their homes.

Turkey has spent a great deal of time working to modify the demographic structure in Northern Cyprus. The Turkish government has resettled 80,000 Turkish citizens to this area, mostly to the homes of the Greek Cypriots who were evicted. Turkey also promoted a "unilateral declaration of independence" by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983, although this was condemned by the UN Security Council and the U.S. government. Turkey is the only country that officially recognizes the TRNC as a sovereign state to this day.

As atrocities against various ethnic groups plague our world today, it is time to confront the aggression of the Turkish government against the Greek Cypriots. Although there have been attempts to settle this dispute peacefully, Greeks on Cyprus continue to suffer, especially when you take human rights into consideration. They are often banned from attending school and work, are not permitted to obtain medical care, and are kept from their families living in the Republic of Cyprus. This is a gross infringement on their basic human rights and clearly violates of international law.

Mr. Speaker, although there have been numerous UN resolutions for Turkey to return these refugees to their homes and withdraw its troops, the Turkish government has unashamedly ignored these requests. With the entire international community working hard to remedy this issue peacefully by continuously requesting that the Turkish government respect the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Cyprus, it is disconcerting to watch as they disregard these various offers of help. Not only is this an affront to the United States, but the global community as a whole.

In spite of these setbacks, the United States, as well as the rest of the international community, must carry on their effort to find a peaceful resolution to this struggle that has split Cyprus in two. As a member of Congress, I will continue to do all that I can to bring about Justice for the Greek Cypriots.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CASS BALLENGER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 18, 2001

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and was not present for Roll Call votes 233, 234, and 235 on July 17, 2001. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on Roll Call vote 233 and "nay" on Roll Call votes 234 and 235.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT
AUTHORIZING CONGRESS TO
PROHIBIT PHYSICAL DESECRA-
TION OF THE FLAG OF THE
UNITED STATES

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2001

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I have opposed a resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution authorizing the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States. I believe burning the flag is an offensive and disrespectful act. In some cases, it is an act that is already illegal under statute. However, I do not support amending the Constitution to make it a criminal offense to burn any flag under any circumstances.

I can state with confidence that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle can agree that the liberty and freedom guaranteed by our Constitution, and symbolized by our grand old flag, is our nation's greatest strength. Every day, the freedoms that surround us in our homes, schools and places of work here in this chamber, are a constant reminder of what our flag means, and what has been sacrificed to ensure its lasting stability and continuity in our nation. Every day Congress is in session, we pledge allegiance to this flag, "and to the republic for which it stands."

The willful destruction of our nation's flag is deeply offensive. The flag is a symbol of our national unity and a powerful source of national pride, and deserves to be treasured and treated with respect at all times.

Yet, despite my love for my nation and the flag, and my deep admiration for the men and women who fought and died defending our nation, I cannot support this well-intended resolution.

I believe it is important that we take heed to the constitutional parameters that will be reduced as a result of this amendment. One of our most cherished liberties, and one in which the Framers of the Constitution placed a heavy hand upon, is our freedom of expression. Every individual in America is truly free to express his or her opinions, without threat of hindrance or persecution. From time to time we undoubtedly may disagree with another's opinion or action. Nonetheless, this does not mean that their views should be constricted by the Constitution. If any limits are placed on this freedom, we are opening the possibility that others can be placed on our freedom of expression at a later time. Unfortunately, I believe this amendment will indeed serve to reduce that freedom which we all love and hold

dear to our hearts. If we start down this dark path, we are opening the door to a precedent of extreme consequences. We must not allow this to occur.

It is critical in this debate to remember that what provides for our freedom and our supreme rule of law is not the flag itself, for this is a mere symbol. What binds our nation, what our soldiers swore and died to protect and what all Americans cherish, is the fundamental beliefs held in our Constitution. The flag is the symbol of the Republic, the symbol of what the Constitution provides: the rights that all Americans enjoy. As the distinguished senior Senator and Constitutional Scholar from the state of West Virginia, Senator ROBERT BYRD, so eloquently stated, "That flag is the symbol of our Nation. In a way, we might say that flag is the symbol of our Nation's history. That flag is the symbol of our Nation's values. We love that flag. But we must love the Constitution more. For the Constitution is not just a symbol, it is the thing itself!"

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT
AUTHORIZING CONGRESS TO
PROHIBIT PHYSICAL DESECRA-
TION OF THE FLAG OF THE
UNITED STATES

SPEECH OF

HON. RAY LAHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2001

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.J. Res. 36, legislation which proposes an amendment to the Constitution of the United States allowing Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States. I am a proud cosponsor of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, our flag is not just cloth; it is a potent symbol of our history and the march of freedom. Our flag has flown over the battlefields of the Revolutionary War, inspired our national anthem as it remained aloft over Fort McHenry, stood for national unity in the Civil War, served as a clarion call to freedom in two world wars, and even stands on the moon as a symbol of peaceful exploration on behalf of mankind.

For millions of people around the world, the American flag represents a commitment to democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. It is a living representation of mankind's aspiration for freedom.

Millions of veterans have rallied to our flag in time of crisis. These men and women have fought and died under the Stars and Stripes to defend our nation and to liberate people overseas who have been caught in the web of tyranny. The blood of our veterans has been shed to protect our flag and all that it stands for. Many of our veterans have sacrificed their lives so that our flag could continue to fly.

To allow our flag, which represents all Americans—which holds out to the world the promise of liberty—to be desecrated, would be an affront to the people of this country and others around the world who are stirred by this symbol of democracy. Freedom of speech is an important American right. But freedom of speech is not a license to desecrate the fabric of our freedom. It is proper, and it is time, to protect our cherished flag from abuse with a Constitutional amendment.